3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

disease. The sounds of the whistles followed each other at closer intervals and the rattles were shaken with still more energy and persistance. The ceremony was finished when all the members of the community were relieved of the bad influence which had entered them. The expelled disease was the aphtous fever from which the cattle were suffering at that time and which seriously affected the health of many individuals, who had eaten contaminated meat and become ill.

The medicine-men had changed their spirits into *istins* (sort of ravens) to call on the disease. As the disease was particularly severe at this time the first attempt at conciliation did not meet with much success. The men had to change into *masa* (earth bees). When the disease is being expelled, it is chased into the ground.

XIV. Treatment of People Possessed by Ho?nat-Lele

Upon visiting a Matako settlement (near Las Lomitas, Formosa) one night I had the opportunity to be present at the curing of two cases of demoniac possession. In the first case the patient was a girl of 13 or 14 and in the other a child. The girl had gone to the bush and had been caught by a *nǫoLe* or a *ho?nat-Lele* who lives in thickets under the earth. It was not a *welán* who entered the body of the girl as the *welán* live in the *yuchan* only and the girl had not walked near one of these trees. The *ho?nat-Lele* made its presence known through the girl's hysterical fits. She cried and sobbed as though she were in pain. The Indians told me something was hurting her, although she did not suffer from any disease. They laid particular stress upon this fact. When I arrived the girl was surrounded by an old man who acted as medicine-man, her father, two aunts and another man, whose relationship with the patient I was unable to determine. Each had put on a red poncho with white stripes. The possessed girl and all those with her were standing, with the exception of the medicine-man, who was squatting near the patient's legs.

726 which was dry at the time. Then, moving along the left bank, they came upon the people of San Martín from the rear, cutting off their retreat. A large number of the latter, mostly women and children
[127] were killed or wounded. The Yuto people carried off a child with them as a prisoner.

Divers Religious Beliefs

776
158 Among the spirits the most to be feared are the wilan who possess their victims and sink them into a state of furious madness. Thus, in the San Patricio mission a young girl all at once became pale, her eyes starting from their sockets. She fled, bolting into the wooded area, where she remained for four days. Those who followed her said that her tracks disappeared as suddenly as if the girl had flown through the air.

Another girl got up from a fainting spell during which she had been under the care of four witch doctors and said that a spirit had entered her.

Here is a case which took place in San Andrés a short time before my arrival. A Mataco had gone off to some distance from the village in search of a horse. On the way back he imagined that he saw against [15] a tree, a small luminous being, about the size of a cooking pot, which leaped from tree to tree and finally disappeared in the underbrush. Frightened, our Indian fled to the village where he fell in a faint and was shaken by violent convulsions. Doctor C. Smith had to give him a morphine injection to quiet him. The Indian got better and a few days later felt well enough to go out into the surrounding area. On the way back he had the same experience and suffered like aberrations. His parents, shaking with fright, went to get the doctor so that he might give him an injection. According to Dr. C. Smith, such hallucinations may be the result of kidney trouble, which causes the diseased person to have optical illusions, especially the apparition of luminous spots before the eyes. Certain strange and sinister sounds, also, which the Mataco Indians attribute to spirits
[821] are really made by nocturnal birds. And a meteor, which fell into the Pilcomayo during my stay there was explained to me by the Matacos as the fall of an old man with gray hair.

6:Métraux E-5 (no date) 1943 SI7 Mataco SI7

family suspected that she had taken the fruit although she showed none of the usual symptoms. One of her sons asked the missionary for help. As soon as she realized she had been discovered, she jumped up and vehemently denied having taken poison. The son insisted that she had and that she was trying to deceive her family and the missionary. To make sure that she was in no danger, the missionary decided to give her an emetic. The old woman struggled violently, throwing off everyone who approached her; only after an hour's strenuous fight was she overcome and forced to take the purge. Of course her stomach contained large quantities of the poison, which she had timed very carefully to take effect early in the morning when everyone would be deep in sleep and, therefore, unaware of her condition. Had it not been for her son's persistence, she undoubtedly would have been found dead the next day. Her husband, who was devoted to her, appeared to be quite unconcerned and, had the matter been left with him, would have done nothing to save her.

In general, love affairs are said to be the main cause of these suicides. They are particularly frequent on the occasions of the nightly dances which are closely connected with the sexual life of the Matako and at such times may take epidemic proportions. A young man will take poison for some reason and soon after others follow suit. Asked why they try to kill themselves, they explain that they feel compelled to do so by some superior force. The fruit attracts them; the desire to eat it becomes an obsession. When they walk in the bush their attention becomes riveted upon the fruit, which they see everywhere, until the temptation becomes too strong and they eat it.

Young boys at school are quite likely to take poison when they have been scolded by their teacher. For this reason the missionaries must exercise particular care to avoid offense when the poisonous fruit is ripe and, consequently, especially dangerous.

Actually there is a great deal of ostentation in these suicides. It is likely that many who take poison, do not take a fatal dose. Those who really wish to die generally take the poison secretly and try to conceal the fact until it is too late to help them. The others, on the contrary, boast about what they have done and are willing, even eager to get medical treatment.

This mania also has its simulators and fakers. Certain individuals imitate all the clinical symptoms, —convulsions, foaming, etc.— without having tasted the deadly fruit. Here again the desire to show off, to be the center of attention is foremost. Every suicide attempt provokes turmoil in the village and everyone flocks to the house where